

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to LFPP staff to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: (e.g. October 1-March 31, 20XX)	September 30, 2014 – March 31, 2015
Today's Date:	06/30/2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Ann N. Milton
Authorized Representative Phone:	(229) 432-1877 or (229) 255-9119
Authorized Representative Email:	amilton@healthylivingfarms.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Healthy Living Farms (HLF)
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Healthy Living Farms Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Project
Grant Agreement Number: (e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)	14-LFPPX-GA-0045
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	ALBANY, GA
Total Awarded Budget:	25,000

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

☒ Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

☐ Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

The goal of this planning grant is to prepare the Healthy Living Farms (HLF) to lead in providing market opportunity, training/mentoring and greater food distribution access to rural farmers in the SW-GA region.

i. Goal/Objective 1:

The purpose of this grant was to prepare a Business Plan, Marketing Analysis and Safety Manual to assist in the planning process to establish a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Project. Our main goal is to be a Premier Supplier of Fruits and Vegetables in Southwest Georgia by serving as an aggregate and training/mentoring facility for Small/Rural Farmers. The HLF CSA will provide these farmers access to local markets, increase their competitive-edge and provide locally-grown, nutritious foods to consumers in food deserts. The title of the Project is the Healthy Living Farms Community Supported Agriculture Project. HLF is located in NW Albany Georgia on a major thoroughfare from several surrounding counties. Through this planning process our eyes have been opened to see the greater need for establishing partnerships/mentoring programs for Small/Rural Farmers who lack the resources and the knowledge for establishing successful farm operations.

a. Progress Made: Healthy Living Farms has completed the first draft of the CSA Business Plan. We are meeting with the local Small Business Development Office to review and provide feedback. The initial draft provides a blueprint for our near term and long term goals. The business plan will be utilized as a tool to gauge how well the farm is doing in comparison to our initial goals and to keep us on a target for a successful operation. Through this process we have discovered that a CSA is both a marketing strategy and a mechanism to emphasize our Good Food Movement for our community at large. We have identified our target markets; local restaurants, consumers, the Faith Based Community and small rural farmers. It is our goal to be an incubator that positions local farmers to engage in sustainable food system activities and to affect systemic change in the food system.

b. Impact on Community: HLF has established itself as a local/regional food hub in Southwest Georgia. Our community has ready access to seasonal fruits and vegetables through our on-site Farmers Market. We already have a history of aggregation and distribution of Chemical-Free Locally Grown food products in our community. We have discovered that if you educate the community on the benefits of eating healthy and provide access they are very receptive to healthy food alternatives.

ii. Goal/Objective 2:

Develop and establish a database of small rural farmers who participate in the HLF-CSA.

a. Progress Made: HLF is currently purchasing produce from local farmers in the Southwest GA area; Dougherty County, Worth County, Calhoun County, Miller County and Dooly County. This produce is sold directly to consumers from our on-site Farmers Market and will also be distributed to local restaurants. We decided that in order to reduce the carbon blueprint we would limit our produce pick up distance to 75 miles. Through this process we have discovered the necessity for a refrigerated vehicle to transport the produce because most Small/Rural farmers don't have the resources nor suitable means of transportation. We also discovered the need for refrigeration for storage and product display.

See attachment A

b. Impact on Community: We have produced consistent revenue streams for Small/Rural Farmers and value added businesses. We have enhanced access to quality fruits and vegetables. We are also providing opportunities to improve health by readily making quality produce available for our community.

iii. Goal/Objective 3:

Plan and execute advertisement about this proposed CSA through social media, print media (flyers, brochures, hand bills, news articles and public service announcements) and coordinated community outreach.

a. Progress Made: HLF has advertised the CSA Project through social and print media, news articles and community outreach. We were spotlighted by the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce as the Best Display winner in the 2014 Business Expo – Let's Grow Together. We currently participate in the Think Local Campaign, a commercial highlighting the benefits of supporting local businesses. HLF introduced the 2014 Holiday CSA Project to the community via the Fox 31 Good Day Show. We also participated in several local events announcing the HLF CSA Project. HLF piloted a successful Holiday CSA in November – December 2014 for 6 weeks. We sold 11 memberships, 2 Standard Family Memberships and 9 Small Family Memberships. See Attachments.

- B1. HLF Holiday CSA Brochure
- B2. HLF Holiday CSA Brochure Insert
- B3. HLF Farmer Field Day
- B4. Albany Area Chamber of Commerce Business Expo
- B5. Albany Area Chamber of Commerce Think Local Campaign (See attached video link)
- B6. HLF Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
- B7. Lee County students meet local farmers
- B8. The Daily Dirt Campaign
- B9. Fort Valley State University Organic Fruit & Vegetables Pest & Weed Control Work Shop
- B10. Fox 31 Good Day Show – Healthy Living

b. Impact on Community: Increased awareness and the importance of local and community farming. We also provided recipes and nutrition information on our website and Facebook page.

IV. Goal/Objective 4:

Develop a Food Safety and Food Management Manual and on-site trainings for Small/Rural Farmers.

a. Progress Made: HLF has completed our Food Safety and Management Manual and will conduct an on-site training on May 19, 2015. We have discovered that several Small/Rural Farmers were very knowledgeable in growing produce but lack a clear understanding of the necessity of establishing safety practices. This has afforded us the opportunity to be an education resource for establishing safety programs for our farm partners. We also discovered the lack of administrative skill, which is detrimental to a successful operation. There is also a need to assist with record keeping and total farm management. Several farmers grow out of habit with little consideration for markets or production costs. HLF on-site training will help provide farmers with the knowledge and the hands on skills to establish Food Safety and Farm Management Systems that will posture them for success. Georgia Organics awarded HLF 10 Scholarships, which allowed HLF to take 10 local farm partners to the 18th Annual Conference & Expo Recipe for Change hosted February 20 – 21, 2015 in Athens GA.

b. Impact on Community: Local and regional counties will have access to fruits, vegetables and value added products that have been grown and processed in a safe environment.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 20__). Include further explanation if necessary.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: The HLF Farm Operation has the potential to create 3 jobs at our on-site market (e.g. Farmers Market Associate, Recruitment/Marketing Specialist, and Agriculture Specialist). Our goal to promote the Good Food Movement by expanding markets is certain to increase the need for additional farm employees. Currently we are also supported by more than 30 volunteers throughout each season.
- ii. Number of jobs retained: We will retain the 2 positions already supporting our farm operation.
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: There is also the potential for each farm partner to hire additional farm labor to plant and harvest produce as demand increases.
- iv. Number of markets expanded: 10 – 15 growers, 3 - 4 wholesalers and retail.
- v. Number of new markets established: 5 or more (Food hub, Farmers' Markets, CSA, local restaurants, retail and institutional customers)
- vi. Market sales increased by \$1,175.00 and increased by 1%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 15 farmers have benefited from our project.

a. Percent Increase: 3.5% income increase for the partners.

3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?

Yes, we've partnered with the local housing authority and other social service organizations to provide on-site markets at their locations. We also accepting EBT purchases and pursuing an incentive program for these purchases. We have also increased our Asian and Hispanic customers.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?

GA Organics

Albany/Dougherty Chamber of Commerce

Housing Authority

Darton College

Strive 2 Thrive

Trumpet of God Ministries & Training Center

Well Springs Optimal

UGA Small Business Development Center

Local USDA National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

- ii. How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved?

Our community partners have supported our project through leadership, advertising and financial support. They have provided valuable statistical data for the completion of our planning project.

- iii. How will they contribute to future results?

The community is vital to our success. They will continue to promote our CSA Project and assist with the establishment of new markets. We are working closely with the local USDA NRCS Office to obtain Organic Certification through their cost share program and we have also partnered with the GA Organics cost share program.

- iv.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? We have contracted the development of our business plan and we are also working with UGA SBDC to assist with the development and the review of the HLF CSA Business Plan.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?

- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

*Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).

We have not published our outstanding results. We would like to publish our results.

- i. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? If so, how did you collect the information? Through the CSA Customer Feedback
- ii. What feedback have you collected thus far (specific comments)?
We received customer feedback from our November and December 2014 6 week Holiday CSA Pilot. The CSA Members (11 total) overall feedback was favorable for the program and product quality. However, through additional feedback we recognized the need to provide smaller portion for households of less than 3 individuals and for an expanded variety of produce. We have also received feedback via the HLF Facebook page.

7. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: ☒
- ii. Did the project generate any income?
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? Yes the project generated \$1,175.00 and it put directly back into the farm for operating cost.

8. Lessons Learned:

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).
We piloted a Holiday CSA and discovered that we did not have adequate storage for the produce that was being purchased from local growers. We were limited as to the amount of produce that could be purchased and we soon realized that transportation was a major issue. The majority of local/rural farmers are able to grow a quality product but they didn't follow GHP or safety practices for transportation. As a result of this we asked to redistribute the grant funds to include refrigeration.

We are also able to purchase peas from local growers but without a pea seller the purchase was a waste. The majority of our customers request shelled peas.
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: All goals were achieved but we were unable to
- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project: If you are a farmers there's not a lot of time available to attend a training in WI. For training needs do your research and plan accordingly.

9. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs

retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.

HLF has applied for the LFPP Implementation Grant with hopes of being awarded funding. We will continue to host workshops, farm visits and community events promoting the HLF CSA Project. We will travel to surrounding counties to recruit farmers and CSA Members to provide outreach services and establish partnerships with Small/Local Farmers. We will also seek to increase the marketing base for Small/Rural Farmers by collaborating and partnering with local businesses to offer additional market opportunities. Through the NRCS EQUIP and Conservation Program we will begin the process to become Organic Certified and work towards the GAP Certification, which will expand our market. In June 2015, we will officially launch The 2015 HLF CSA Project with a goal to recruit 30 members. We will also increase the number of farm partners participating in our training and outreach services.

We will continue to create awareness and provide education to the community. Our CSA Project has proven to be timely based on the responsive community support. Starting a food hub now may makes more sense than ever.

- ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?